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ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 86 (2013) 192 – 197

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

V Congress of Russian Psychological Society

Influence of Contemporary Gender Transformation On The Personality Gender System

Olga G. Lopukhova*

Kazan Federal University, 18 Kremlyovskaya St., Kazan 420008, Russian Federation

Abstract

In the presented research we hypothesized that controversial and mismatched transition of gender in contemporary society has an effect on personality system and results in heightened variability of gender identity, gender attitude, sense-life points, contents and prevalence of contradictory variants of interconnections between these components. Battery of methods (modified BSRI, modified Sex Role Scale and questionnaire “Life goals”) was completed by 124 participants (50 men и 74 women). The data analysis allows us to discover the specificity of contradictions between components of personality gender system. It was shown that non-gender-typed identity is connected with androcentrism. It was also shown that gender attitudes are typically mixed and do not agree with personality gender traits. Sense-life points were confirmed as gender-related in individual consciousness.

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Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Russian Psychological Society

Keywords: Gender transformation, Gender attitudes, Gender identity, Masculinity, Femininity, Life goals.

1. Introduction

The gender transformation means system changes of traditional positions of men and women both in the employment and family domains which result in egalitarianism. Transition to egalitarian belief system implies the acceptance of equally significant individual self-assessment, social claims and assertions both for men and women. It is accompanied by widening of gender roles and revision of traditional “women” and “men” values. For present women it has become normal to orient themselves on professional implementation and to be self-sufficient, at the same time for men “family values” acquire special importance. The egalitarian model of family, which means equality between spouses in all life domains changes the traditional model of family based on complementarity gender roles, spouse interdependency, hierarchy relations. In the egalitarian model of a family

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-917-270-7703.

E-mail address: olopuhova@rambler.ru

both men and women have equivalence relation, should be employed and take care of children, orient themselves on reality situations, not on traditional divisions of responsibilities in accordance with the sex role.

However processes of gender-role egalitarianism are not total and are very much contradictory. According to Anderson and Jonson's [1] results, the egalitarian gender-role attitudes depend on gender, culture and domain: women were generally more egalitarian than men; all participants were more egalitarian in the employment than in the social domain; the tendency to endorse conventional roles in the social domain was stronger among Asian Americans, both men and women, than among other participants of the research. In Russian sociological studies [2] it was also identified that the considerable part of contemporary Russian men and women have coupled egalitarian gender representations with the benevolent sexism, gender difference and a subordinate status. Bem [3], moreover, has shown that contemporary society gender relations are determined by both egalitarianism and androcentrism (the privileging of male experience, physiology, ideas, and conception of the world) tendencies. From psychologist's viewpoint it is very important to know how these contradictory gender transformations are reflected in personality.

There are different points of view concerning the influence that personality experiences at the transition on egalitarian gender relationship system. According to Bem's views [3], gender transformation in contemporary society liberates the personality from the necessity to satisfy the requirements of gender stereotype system, and gives the personality possibilities of self-realization, self-expression, and freedom to choose life goals and behavior strategy. At the same time, some researchers denote certain negative consequences of gender transformations for personality, describing different variants of personality gender conflicts [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9].

The goals of this study were to investigate how contemporary process of gender transformation influences different levels of personality system. Three different components of personality gender system – gender identity, gender attitudes and life-sense points were assigned. Gender identity of personality can be considered via masculinity/femininity criteria as a normative for certain society «male» and «female» traits, action, behavior, appearance. Gender attitudes are considered as one of gender belief system components [10]. They reflect current egalitarian and traditional gender ideologies. Life-sense points determine the individual choice of life strategy and assessment of successfulness according to the value system of a certain society. Traditional gender belief system of «female» life strategy accorded with family goals and values, whereas the «male» life strategy accorded with professional self-realization. Different points of view can be found in modern studies of men and women life-sense points content at transition to egalitarian system of gender relationship. One of them postulates that, regardless of sex assignment, equal important sense-generative orientations are both «family» and «professional self-realization» [11]. Another point of view emphasizes the reflection of androcentrism tendency in personality life self-determination. In particular, Ozhygova [12] revealed that both men and women, of all age category, in life planning gave preference to the «traditional masculine» strategy of self-realization based on profession attainments. However this tendency is also potentially conflict for personality.

There is a common opinion that men can more easily get success in simultaneous achievement of professional and family goals. The reason for this opinion is that man's intrinsic family obligations are traditionally not burdensome, whereas obligation of financial support of family is related to professional self-realization. As for women career orientation means waiving family file, because women's family obligations (child rearing, housekeeping, etc.) take a lot of time. Therefore researches discovered specific gender-role conflict of women, which are not typical for men [6], [8]. At the same time, there is an opinion that in contemporary condition of Russian society both men and women cannot achieve full professional self-realization. Zdravomyslova defines it as the «mutual sacrifice phenomena»: women give their professional self-realization as a sacrifice for family, whereas men also give their professional self-realization as a sacrifice for earning money for his family [11].

Consequently, literature review discovers controversial positions: on the one hand, there is an opinion that transition to egalitarian gender relationship system gives personality some new possibilities for realization of that type of gender system of personality, which is a result of his/her individual experience based not on straight

assimilation of gender norms, but on its creative conversion. On the other hand, probability of intrapersonal gender conflicts formation increases because of controversial and mismatched transitions of gender in society. In this study we expected heightened variability of gender identity, gender attitude, sense-life points contents as a result of contemporary gender transformation influence. We also expected the prevalence of contradictory variants of interconnections between personality gender system components, both for men and for women.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

There were 124 participants of the study from different occupation domains: 50 men и 74 women. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 60. During data analysis all participants were initially divided into three age-groups: young, adult and senior. Significant differences between these groups were not found, so for the further study these groups were pooled together.

2.2. Procedure and Analyses

Personality gender identity was measured with Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) adapted to Russia [13]. Modified Russian version of this questionnaire [14] revised content of Masculinity, Femininity and Neutral subscales according to contemporary gender stereotypes of Russian society. Each of subscales included 14 items. The items were arranged on the 5-point Likert-scale. Masculinity and Femininity subscales indicated stereotypic gender personality traits and Neutral scale included traits common for both men and women. Subscale scores were calculated by the sum of the scores of the items divided by the number of the items in each subscale. Comparison of one person's scores on Masculinity and Femininity subscales allows evaluating his/her degree of psychological androgyny considered as non-gender-typed (the gender stereotypes independency). Items "masculine" and "feminine" included in Masculinity and Femininity subscales had special role: they allowed detecting person's self-evaluation of his/her masculinity and femininity. Comparison of "masculine" and "feminine" items scores with total subscales scores allow to evaluate gender self-perception adequacy.

For measuring of gender attitudes in various domains we used modified Kalin Sex Role Ideology Scale [15]. Originally Kalin Sex Role Ideology Scale was one-factor and included 30 items (15 items indicated egalitarian views and 15 items indicated traditional views on gender relationship). Modified Sex Role Ideology Scale [16] included 22 items (9 items indicated egalitarian views and 13 items indicated tradition views on gender relationship) and covered all domain of gender relationship: work, family, education, private gender relations. Examples of benevolent sexism items ("traditional views on gender relationship") are: "Woman's main mission is family life", "Getting good job is more important for a man than for a woman", "Man should earn more than a woman because he needs to support his family", "Man should always take initiative in relationship". Examples of egalitarian views items are "Women can master any occupation", "Education has the same degree of importance both for women and men", "If a woman has a little child it does not mean that she should give up work and stay with him at home". Statements are rated on a dichotomic scale as "disagree" and "agree". "Agree" gives 1 point and "disagree" gives 0 points. Sums of points for egalitarian attitudes and traditional attitudes are compared. Combination of high score for traditional attitude scale and low score for egalitarian attitude scale is interpreted as traditional type of personality gender attitudes (benevolent sexism). Combination of high score for egalitarian attitude scale and low score for traditional attitude scale is interpreted as egalitarian type of personality gender attitudes. Similar scores for both traditional and egalitarian attitudes scales are interpreted as "mixed" type of gender attitudes.

Questionnaire «Life goals» was used to discover sense-life points which may be important for realizing traditional men's and women's roles. Respondents were asked to range 20 life goals and values from "very

important”(1) to “not important at all”(20). “Traditional women’s role” score of life goals was mostly according to “family values” and reflected orientation on private relationship. This score included 10 items: “to have children”, “to get married” “to take care of parents”, “to be necessary for relatives”, “to find love”, “to be attractive”, “to keep close-knit family”, “to be given every support and love”, “to give a good upbringing and education for children”, “to be psychologically involved in own children’s life”. “Traditional men’s role” score of life goals included mostly professional values and reflected orientation on individual wellbeing: “to acquire a good profession”, “to achieve a high professional level”, “to have a lot of free time”, “to earn a lot of money”, “to have a high social level”, “to have quality time with friends”, “to ensure financial wellbeing for family”, “to be necessary for others”, “to be independent”, “to be well-known”.

Frequency analysis, factor analysis and inter-correlation analysis were used for data processing.

3. Results and Discussion

Measures of gender identity of participants show that non-gender-typed persons were in the majority (70% of men and 82% of women for all age groups). Also significant age differences were not found in scores of “masculinity”/“femininity” and of traditional/egalitarian gender attitudes.

In spite of the fact that most participants were non-gender-typed persons, content of their gender identity had some differences. Traits of masculinity scale usually had high scores among both men and women. Femininity traits were given high scores predominantly by women. Self-perceptions as a feminine/masculine person also had differences between men and women. As a rule, men deny that they are “feminine” and evaluate themselves as “masculine”. Women are inclined to admit high level of their masculine as well as feminine traits. Adequacy of self-perceptions as a feminine/masculine person was determined by analysis of correlation between scores of “masculinity”/“femininity” scales and self-perception as masculine and feminine. Our result shows that men estimate more adequately their masculinity, than femininity, and women are more adequate in estimation of their femininity but generally overestimate their masculinity. These data reflect androcentrism in gender identity of both men and women.

Measurements of gender attitudes have discovered that variant of mixed gender attitudes type prevails among the participants. “Pure” types of gender attitudes were very rare. Three women with egalitarian type of gender attitudes, one woman with traditional type, five men with traditional type of gender attitudes and two men with egalitarian type have been found.

Our study showed no correlation between gender attitudes, masculinity/femininity scores of personality and self-perception as a “masculine” or “feminine” person. It means that we can expect any combination of these components in a certain individual person. For example a woman with masculine gender type, who has self-perception as a “masculine”, can have gender attitudes expecting benevolent sexism (attitudes when men should always take initiative in relationship, that woman should care only about family and children, and should not earn more, than her husband, etc.) from surrounding men. Similar disagreement situation can arise in case when men with feminine gender type have gender attitudes with benevolent sexism. Also masculine type of a man or feminine type of a woman can have egalitarian attitudes. Such cases will inevitably lead to intra- and inter-personality gender conflicts. Generally, our data allow us to conclude that result of interaction of personality gender system components (masculinity, femininity, gender type, self-perception as a masculine/feminine person, accepting benevolent sexism/egalitarianism in attitudes) cannot be predicted if we know only one of the parameters.

Application of factor analysis allowed us to discover that life goals are generally characterized by opposition between «family values» и «work values» both for men and women. Content of factors was different for men and women. For men life goals were divided by factor analysis into three groups, which are characterized by opposition between orientations on self-realization as a father or as a professional, on self-assertion in social relations or on achievement of normative goals, on self-realization in a family or individualistic wellbeing. For

women life goals were also divided by factor analysis into three groups, which are characterized by opposition between orientations on family relations or on individual self-expression, on self-assertion “between others” or “for others”, on family relations or on professional self-determination.

On the next stage of research correlations between sense-life points, gender attitudes and personality gender characteristics were discovered. It was found that in sense-life points for high masculinity men, as a rule, it was not important «to be necessary for others» ($r = 0,39, p \leq 0,05$) but it was very important «to keep close-knit family» ($r = - 0,29, p \leq 0,05$). For men with high score of masculine self-perception, as a rule, it was also not important «to be necessary for others» ($r = 0,37, p \leq 0,05$). For men with benevolent sexism it was more important «to have children» ($r = - 0,35, p \leq 0,05$) and not important «to be independent» ($r = 0,43, p \leq 0,05$). For men with egalitarian attitudes it was more important «to be necessary for relatives» ($r = 0,37, p \leq 0,05$).

Women with a high score of masculinity scale, as a rule, are more oriented on aims and values of professional domain: “to acquire a good profession” ($r = - 0,26, p \leq 0,05$), “to achieve a high professional level” ($r = - 0,28, p \leq 0,05$), “to earn a lot of money” ($r = - 0,28, p \leq 0,05$). At the same it was not important for them “to have a lot of free time” ($r = 0,26, p \leq 0,05$) and “to be necessary for others” ($r = 0,36, p \leq 0,05$). High score femininity women rejected life goal “to be independent” ($r = 0,37, p \leq 0,05$) that agreed with traditional belief about “female role” as dependent position. Gender self-perception of women are consistent with their life goals: for women having higher masculinity self-perception, as a rule, it is not important “to be attractive” ($r = 0,24, p \leq 0,05$) but it is more important to “to be well-known” ($r = - 0,24, p \leq 0,05$). In case of high score of both femininity and masculinity, for women it is less important “to be independent” ($r = 0,24, p \leq 0,05$). That can be explained as follows: on the one hand it can be the reflection of common collectivist attitudes of our culture. On the other hand, there are believes about high importance of a woman’s dependent position.

4. Conclusion

The study has shown that in contemporary gender transformation the contents and correlations of different components of personality gender system have some common features for both men and women.

The tendency to be non-gender-typed prevailed for gender identity component of personality system that shows egalitarian norms influence in a contemporary society. But at the same time content of gender identity reflects the influence of androcentrism on individual consciousness because both men and women in their self-evaluation are attracted by masculinity traits.

At the level of gender attitudes the general tendency to combine traditionally gendered and egalitarian views, as well as the absence of intercorrelation with relevant gender identity characteristics indicate the high probability of inter- and intrapersonal conflicts.

At sense-life points level of personality both men and women have oppositions between “family-oriented” and “professional oriented” life goals in combination with “individualistic” and “social-oriented” life goals. The priority of “professional oriented” and “individualistic” life goals with rejection of “family-oriented” goals was typical for women with high masculinity. Men with high masculinity level typically prefer “family-oriented” and reject “social-oriented” life goals. Men with high degree of egalitarian attitudes typically prefer “to be necessary for relatives” as a sense-life goal.

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